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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the writing done by third graders and the processes used when learning to use writing as a meaning-making activity. Four focal students were followed through composing episodes. The classroom was located in a suburban, upper middle class area in Ohio. Less than 3% of the school district population were members of a minority group. The classroom teacher used a whole language philosophy, an informal learning environment, and an integrated curriculum. Behaviors of the writers were observed and recorded through the use of field notes and tape recordings. Students completed think-aloud protocols. Results indicated: (1) distinctive similarities and differences existed among the focal writers; (2) drafting (or uninterrupted writing) was the most frequently used writing behavior across all subject areas; (3) across curricula areas, students demonstrated few revision strategies; (4) planning self-talk often accompanied drafting; (5) students imitated text and format from models provided by the teacher, literature, and other students; (6) students did not compose or generate original text; (7) in the area of language arts, students imitated format more often than actual text; (8) in the area social studies, students imitated actual text more often than format; and (9) actual writing completed by the student was influenced by the student's beliefs about composing. Findings suggest that social interactions do play a part in the act of writing for the learners. (Contains 44 references, and 3 tables and 7 figures of data.) (RS)

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ED 404 671

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COMPOSING AS MEANING-MAKING: AN EXAMINATION OF THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS' COMPOSING STRATEGIES AND BEHAVIORS ACROSS CURRICULAR AREAS

Running Head: Composing as Meaning-Making

Paper presented as the American Education Research Association Conference
in Chicago, IL March 23-27, 1997

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Composing as Meaning-Making: An Examination of Third-Grade Students' Composing Strategies and Behaviors Across Curricular Areas

What occurs as young writers compose? Particularly, what occurs as the young writer composes across subject areas in the curriculum? Writing is the tool used by students to make meaning of the material presented to them in the classroom setting. The young writer composes text within the curicular areas of social studies, language arts, science, and math. It is writing that the child uses to learn and demonstrate learning. Yet, what processes actually occur as the child uses composing as a meaning-making activity?

Writing is a complex process, influenced by many factors (Daiute, as in Jenson, 1993). These many factors may include cognitive, social, and cultural influences. The writer's linguistic development, psychological state, the writer's past experiences such as educational history, literacy acquisition, the view of the self as a writer, parental and sibling influence, as well as environmental factors such as home support, teacher and peer support and interaction, and classroom learning activities (Strickland, 1993) are all influential factors affecting writing. In order to understand what writers do as they write, we must be able to understand these complex and interrelated influences (Jenson, 1993). It is the goal of this paper to explore and describe the strategies and behaviors that elementary school children use as they compose across curricular areas in the school setting, rather than examine the many additional influences upon the young writer.

The social influences of writing may be provided by adults or peers as the child composes text. The teacher negotiates between the class as a social group (Dyson & Freedman, 1985) and the individual. The individual negotiates with the teacher and with peers. Peers may verbally enter the child's writing, providing a scaffold for further

writing. The child's writing may in turn influence the writing of peers. According to Applebee (as in Jenson, 1993), language learning processes are embedded in the social and cultural contexts of the classroom. Children converse, verbally or in written form, with one another. That interaction is beneficial to each child's cognitive growth. It is the aspect of the social influences upon the child's writing and cognition that will be addressed here.

The component phases of writing do not come in linear order (Rhodes and Shanklin, 1993; Flower & Hayes, 1981). A risk taking environment, a personally meaningful experience, and rehearsal start before students consciously decide to write. Writing is a process of recursion. That is, a backward movement, rereading little bits of discourse, returning to the notion of topic through a key word or item (placeholding meaning), bringing up what is already there and moving it forward (retrospective structuring) and using a sense of audience, correctness (projective structuring) (Perl, 1980).

What are the contexts and supports necessary for young writers to be successful? Opportunities for reading aid in the cognitive development of writing. Reading and writing are different, but parallel cognitive processes (Peterson as in Palmer, 1986). Compared to reading, however, writing can be viewed as quicker, easier, more natural, and preceding reading (Elbow, as in Jenson, 1993). Masterson-Arrowsmith (1992), Strickland (1993), and Murray (1992), have explored the relationship of reading and writing. No doubt, the child's writing and reading are influenced by the experiences with the other. Good readers use many of the same strategies good writers use. They put into practice four cognitive strategies. They plan, translate or interpret, reread (as in

recursiveness), and they reflect and evaluate what they read. However, it is not the intent here to view the reading-writing connection, but to examine what occurs as the intermediate-grade elementary school writer composes text and what influences the writer to construct meaning.

While thinking aloud for revealing detailed content of thought processes used in writing (as in Emig's study, 1971) puts an additional demand on the task of writing and may be viewed by some (Kellogg, 1984) as intrusive, the role of speaking in the writing processes of unsophisticated writers serves a "critical cognitive function" (DiCamilla, 1991). When inner speech is externalized to help young students plan composing, there are benefits. These benefits include the actual production and participation in the planning process by the writer, but peers may also benefit from this discourse, as planning is modeled.

Writing, intermingled with drawing and talk help the child bridge the boundaries between symbolic and social worlds (Dyson, 1988). When the child is able to cross the social boundaries, peers can act as scaffolds in the learning process and the cognitive development of the child.

Peer supports, opportunities for social interaction, and the writer's use of outside supports such as models provided by the teacher, models of literature, outlines, rehearsal, planning, and introspection to enhance writing and composing are some of the strategies used by the young writer that will be examined through a qualitative analysis of children's composing behaviors from a socio-cognitive perspective. Also, a description of the writing behaviors and strategies demonstrated by the young writer will be presented. The

influence of contextual and instructional cues, particularly from other written works, upon the child's writing will play a part in the descriptive analysis to be presented.

As children compose across all areas of the curriculum, they will engage in a process of meaning construction. Spivey (1989, 1990, from Murray, 1992), has devised a *Composing From Sources* (CFS) model which examines three components of cognitive processing during the process of meaning construction when composing using other resources. Those three components of cognitive processing are comprehension (of materials and resources), synthesis (deciding upon what is relative and then organizing this information), and composing (actually constructing a new text). All of these components will be examined in this study, with particular emphasis placed upon what occurs during composing across all areas of the curriculum as children use composing as a tool to make meaning of text and information.

Method

Writing, as well as literacy learning, in classrooms takes place in dynamic, interactive contexts (Dahl, 1993). Therefore, the design of a study which looked at the writing done by third-graders and the processes used by those third-graders when learning to use writing as a meaning-making activity was examined within the context of the classroom. Methodologically, it was necessary for me, as observer, to invoke an emic view of what occurs within that classroom. That is, the daily events were translated and perceived from the learner/writer's point of view.

Four focal learners were followed through composing episodes. Base-line data from the fall of the 1996-97 school year is given for these writers. Repeated sampling of

classroom life and the writing that occurred there was taken up to the mid-year point of late December and early January. A final sampling was conducted and information taken during mid-year (late January/early February) of the school year. Interviews with the classroom teacher have been kept throughout this entire period of the school year. A coding system was developed.

Site. The study took place in Kindergarten through Grade Six elementary school building in a suburban setting of a mid-size school district in Ohio. The classroom in this study is part of an elementary building in which the socioeconomic status is upper middle class. The majority of the elementary school building and the school district population is Caucasian, with less than three percent of the population of the school and district comprised of members from a minority group.

The classroom setting is an informal learning environment. Children are able to select their own seats at any time throughout the day's activities.

This third-grade classroom setting is an instructional setting where the teacher relies upon the philosophy of a whole language approach to instruction for her students. The students were engaged in daily writing, the teacher conferenced daily with some of the individual writers as time permitted. Student writings were displayed and published through a variety of formats, ranging from being displayed on the bulletin board, to being printed in classroom books. The process of this study consisted of focusing on each child's interpretations and writings that occurred during the school day across specific subject areas within an integrated curriculum.

The Focal Students. Focus students were selected during a collaboration between the teacher and the researcher during the second week of school. Four students were selected based upon their interactions with other students as well as from input gathered during the first week of school.

Student	Date of Birth	Work Habits	Test Scores (Iowa Test of Basic Skills and Cognitive Abilities) Administered 10/95						
			Grade Level Equivalent			Percentile Rank			
			Reading	Lang.	Math	verbal	quant	nonverb	composite
Matt	12/87	talkative; listens attentively; works alone; talks aloud as he works	3.0	2.8	1.8	81	91	44	76
Cory	1/88	quiet; listens attentively to teacher; anxious for teacher approval; works alone silently; identified gifted student in nonverbal area	4.4	3.6	3.3	77	93	96	96
Julia	11/87	talkative; off-task/easily distracted worker; watches others as they work	2.1	1.9	1.8	77	68	22	51
Kendra	10/87	talkative; listens attentively; anxious for teacher approval; works with others	2.9	2.3	2.3	74	74	41	61

Table 1.
Focal Student Demographics

Data Sources. Writers were observed in this classroom within the instructional context of the school day. The behaviors of writers as they composed were observed and

recorded through the use of field notes and tape recordings. The social interactions that occurred during these observations were also recorded. Close-proximity observations of one focal learner at a time allowed the episodes to be transcribed and social interaction also took place through the emic perspective of the third-grade writer. These observations were also recorded through the use of field notes. Artifacts not only included the tapes and transcriptions, but student products as well.

An important component of the study and the data collection was the use of student "think aloud" protocols, from the idea of Emig (1971). These think-aloud protocols helped to gain insight into the meaning making component of the study.

In each setting, one focal writer was followed during the course of the observation. The children in this classroom were at first curious about the role of the observer, but with a simple explanation that they were being observed to see how they write, the students soon seemed to ignore the observer. In this study, the researcher functioned as a participant observer, but was only minimally involved as a participant. The researcher role consisted mainly of that of an observer. The observations were done with little participatory involvement in the classroom so as not to affect any of the activities going in the classroom. When appropriate, the researcher might ask questions such as "What are you doing now?" or, "Tell me about it." (Dahl & Freppon, 1995).

Finally, through data collections and analysis, a summary of the similarities and consistencies used by these students across the school year and across different writing sessions within different curricular areas will be given. This summary is given in light of what we can know specifically about the young elementary-aged writer.

Results

What occurs as young writers compose and make meaning through writing? What are some of the strategies and behaviors specific to the young writer during planning, writing, and revising? What sorts of demands influence the writing done by young students in meaning-making contexts? What interactions do students participate in as they write? In what ways do these interactions influence composition? These were the questions driving the focus of this study. An emic view of third-grade writers has led to the following findings:

- There are distinctive similarities and differences among the focal writers.
- Drafting (or uninterrupted writing) is the most frequently used writing behavior across all subject areas.
- Across curricular areas, students demonstrate few revision strategies.
- Planning self-talk often accompanies drafting.
- Students imitate text and format from models provided by the teacher, literature sources, and other students.
- The students did not compose, or generate original text. The student writing exhibited is better described as drafting rather than composing.
- In the area of Language Arts, students imitate format more often than actual text.
- In the area of Social Studies, students imitate actual text more often than format.
- Actual writing completed by the student is influenced by the student's beliefs about composing.

These findings are based upon the examination of writing episodes in the areas of Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science within an integrated curriculum of a third grade classroom. Data provided in the area of Math was virtually non-existant in this classroom. The children were instructed in Math in concrete learning activities with no follow-up activities with writing in the curricular area of Math. For that reason, no mathematics data was collected or presented here. Writing episodes in the areas of

language arts, science and social studies had been recorded, transcribed, and coded by writing strategy or behavior.

There are distinctive similarities and differences among the focal writers.

The chart below gives a percentage of each writer's exhibited writing behaviors over three writing episodes (one each in the curricular areas of Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science). Percentages are rounded. One episode of each curricular area was examined in entirety. Each writing episode in each curricular area occurred within the same time frame. Composing in the areas of Science occurred within the same type of activity. Social Studies composing centered around the same topic and theme, patriotism and the election. Exact writing episodes for each writer could not the recorded, due to limitations of the observer being in close proximity to the writing being analyzed. Therefore, episodes of similar length and of similar topic were used when examining the strategies.

First, it is clear that drafting occurs more frequently than other writing strategies. Secondly, the students use little revision when writing. During revision, when students reread text with the purpose of revising, the students tended to evaluate the text, and tended to make few, if any, changes; approval of self-work is given. At this level, revision of handwriting, with emphasis on correct letter formation occurs. The data show that the students rarely returned to written work and made changes in spelling, or mechanics. All students did reread their work, however, to examine meaning. However, the attention to spelling generally came as students wrote and put words on paper, pausing to check sources (individuals or text) to correctly spell words.

Percentage of Strategies Used By Individual Writers Across Language Arts, Social Studies, Science					
Strategy	**Total percentage for each individual writer and given behavior**				**Total % of all four writers**
• **PLANNING**	**Cory**	**Matt**	**Kendra**	**Julia**	
planning (silent)				1	**0.1**
re-reading/planning	6	6	6	2	**6**
drawing		.4	.4	10	**2**
planning self-talk	10	16	26	28	**20**
audience		.4	1		**0.4**
conferencing	.6		.4		**0.2**
• **WRITING**					
drafting	38	28	21	20	**27**
spelling	11	3	6	3	**6**
mechanics	1	1	1	4	**2**
interactive writing	1				**0.2**
imitating text	4	7	12	4	**7**
imitating format	8	4		2	**4**
extending text					
• **REVISING**					
meaning	2	1	.4	1	**1**
evaluating	.6	5	1	1	**2**
handwriting	3	1	1	1	**2**
spelling			.4	1	**0.2**
mechanics			.4	1	**0.2**
rereading	2		.4	2	**0.8**
conferencing	.6		.4	4	**0.8**
• **OTHER BEHAVIORS**					
length	3	9	6	1	**5**
basic math algorithm			.4		**0.1**
illustrating		6	2	12	**4**
sharing			1	2	**0.7**
conversation	4	10	11	1	**8**
off-task	3	2	.4		**1**

Table 2.
Percentage of Writing Strategies

Planning self-talk often accompanies drafting.

As the students wrote to put words on paper in sporadic episodes that were uninterrupted, the students often interjected talk or announcement of what would be written. At times, the students even asked questions of themselves, as if an answer were expected.

The following excerpt is taken from an entire writing episode in which focal student Kendra demonstrates planning self-talk. In each instance, the self-talk is followed by drafting. Other writing strategies are also present, but not consistently. This excerpt typifies the drafting and planning self-talk shown by all four focal students. The planning self-talk and drafting frequencies are given in the preceding table (Table 2.).

A portion of the actual student product is given in Figure 1.

rereading/planning	Kendra reads aloud.
drafting, imitating text	K: Each state had their own laws (looking at chart) *laws* (traces in yellow crayon)
planning self-talk	K: money. I'm gonna do money in green. This is the only green I got.
drafting, imitating text	In green, Kendra writes, *money* (looks at the chart)
planning self-talk	K: I'm use macaroni and cheese in orange and brown.
drafting, imitating text	(Kendra writes *Problem* in orange, and *here* in brown. She draws a parentheses bracket in each color. Kendra
rereading/planning	then looks at the chart.)
planning self-talk	K: Unite? Isn't that where they join together? They were mad and decided to unite.
drafting	*They deci*
spelling	K: de..cid..ed *ed*
evaluation	K: That's funny. d-e-c-i-e-d.
drafting	*to* *unite.*
planning self-talk	K: I'm gonna put that was a good thing to do when

	they united.
drafting	*(That was a good Idea)*
planning self-talk	K: Should I put what unite means?..No, where does it? I don't want to put...Oh, they met (looking at the
rereading/planning	chart)...
drafting, imitating text	*They met in philadelph-ia, Pa*
length	K: I've only got one page of Chapter One, but I'll bet I'll get more from this....Was it hard for George
planning self-talk	Washington? Yeah, it would have been to settle them down. Is George W. okay?...I'll put Washington.
drafting, imitating text	*George Washington lead the*
planning self-talk	K: Unite. Would that make sense? No, he led the...he led it? it?
revision: meaning	Kendra erases *the* and writes *it.*

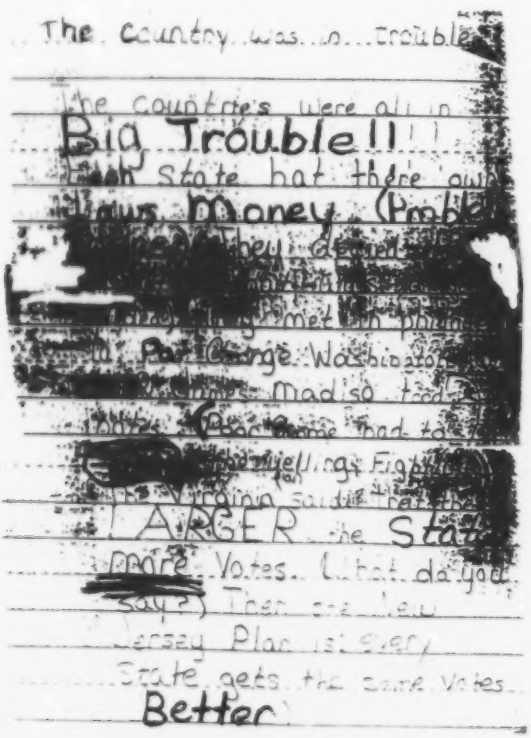

Figure 1.
Kendra's Constitution Book

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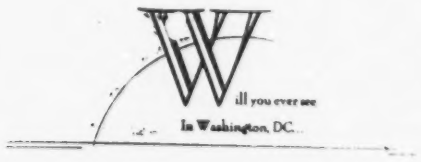
From Kendra's excerpt, we see that planning self-talk is used to announce plans to write, as well as clarify meaning for herself. Planning self-talk is also used as Kendra uses crayons and color to outline words. Planning self-talk is also used as Kendra makes meaning out of the text provided as a model. She poses questions about word meaning, then uses the words in her drafting. Planning self-talk is a behavior that helps the student clarify and make-meaning of the composing event, itself. The act of talking serves a purpose to this age of writer. That purpose is to plan, announce, and clarify meaning.

Students imitate text and format from models provided by the teacher, literature sources, and other students.

Imitating Literature. A vivid example of the use of literature in this classroom and its influence upon the children's writing is the work produced by the four focus students after having the story, Washington, DC , read to them by their teacher. The students had been hearing about places in Washington, D.C. as part of the election unit. This story looks at actual sites in Washington, D.C. and adds a bit of a different twist to each site. An excerpt of the book is given below in Figure 2.



...A polka-dot bear
With a bow in her hair
Hogging Abraham Lincoln's very big chair?

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Figure 2.
Washington, D.C.

The four focal students, Cory, Matt, Julia, and Kendra produced a brief riddle-poem (as modeled by the story) concerning a famous site in Washington, D.C. The students went through a process of planning and conferencing with their teacher. The teacher asked students to model the piece of literature and was quite pleased with the student products. Figure 3 represents the product (in written and drawn form) of the one of the focal students, Matt.

National ~~hallway~~ of Art
an alien named Eart
down the ~~hall~~ tional Art
Matt B.

Figure 4.
Matt's Washington, D.C. poem

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The students did imitate text and format from a variety of literature sources. At times, the students imitated text and format after listening to a story. Other times, the students imitated text and/or format as they used primary sources when researching topics. An example of the use of primary sources as a model for student writing is given below. As discussed in the example, we can see that not only do students use text when imitating format and text, the students may also use pictures presented in literature sources as they construct meaning. The focal student, Julia, uses pictures as part of the process she uses to make meaning of the information.

Julia relies on pictures as she composes. She worked independently while seated at one of the kidney-shaped tables. She was working on the assignment to use books from the class library to get ideas about states. With that information about a particular state, facts would be written and math story problems would be constructed. After writing facts and a math story problem, Julia was to cross out unnecessary information. Julia chose a book, Texas, to gain information. She looked through the book for a short time until she came to a page with a picture. The picture showed a cowboy roping a calf. A copy of the picture is given in Figure 4.

Figure 4.
Illustration from Texas

Although Julia does not imitate words, she does imitate the ideas given in the book in pictures.

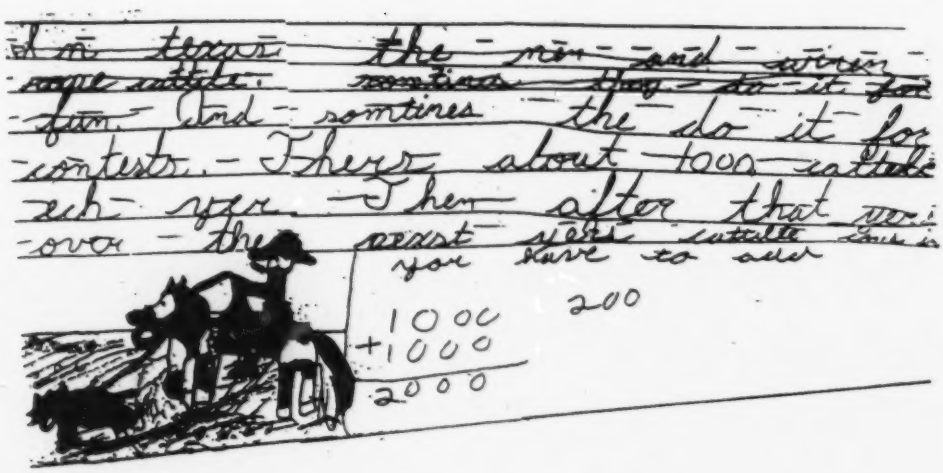

Figure 5.
Julia's Imitation of the model, Texas

Julia's text is not derived from printed text. Julia did not read or attempt to read any of the information given in the book, Texas. Julia's illustration closely resembles the illustration from the book she used as her model. Here, the similarity lies not in the text itself, but in the format or style of the literature and Julia's product. The text that was constructed gives little information about the state of Texas, but gives information about the picture from the literature source.

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Imitating student models. Matt and Kendra were paired together in the *Science Hut* to work on a hands-on science experiment. The two were given cups of white powdery substances. The students first predicted what the substances were, and then predicted how the substances would react when drops of vinegar were added. The two were told that they could discuss the experiment with one another, but should do their own work. The two worked together, reminding each other of the pace and task. The conversation consisted of the two suggesting possible hypothesis and recording results. Each writer used the composing of the other at various times. Text was imitated.

planning self-talk conversation	K: Okay. What do I put? It turned, it turned ...It looks like stone. It looks like stone, doesn't it? Doesn't it look like stone sort of to you Matt? (wrote *Stone)* M: Yeah! K: No, it didn't bubble. It didn't. M: It didn't dissolve. K: I just put stone down. What did you put down?
planning self-talk drafting	M: When I put in the vinegar, it made a hole in the middle. (He said this slowly and wrote it as he spoke.) *When I put in the vinagar, it made a hole in the midle.*
off-task talk	M: We have to keep it quiet or they're gonna find out all the stuff.
planning self-talk imitating text	K: Well, it did put a hole. (As she wrote, she said slowly, it did...) *it did put a hole.*
audience	Omigosh, she won't know what I'm talking about. I wrote it did...No, she will, don't you think?
length (pacing)	Matt tapped the spoon onto the number four area of the plate. He did this loudly. Kendra looked over. M: Alright, now number four. (putting powder on plate) K: Number four, coming up. Next, omigosh. Oh, no.
planning self-talk rereading/planning drafting	What do I think will happen? What did I put down? (turned back to first page) Flour. It will dissolve. (wrote *bubble, Fizz, desolve,*)
imitating text	Matt wrote *I think it will fizz and bubble.*

conversation	M: Hey, look how it goes down. It goes down. K: Don't tell me. Don't tell me. M: I won't. Wo! I got tons in this one. Oh, look at it! Little pools of stuff on the side.
(planning self-talk)	K: Oh my gosh! I didn't get that much. M: It pours down the side! It makes a little volcano. K: Omigosh! It's cool! M: Awesome! K: It spreads out sides....(sounding out)
drafting	Matt wrote *It poured down the side!*
	Kendra wrote
drafting	*It spead* (added *r*)
spelling	K: S-P-R-E-A-D
imitating text	*out the side*
planning self-talk: mechanics	M: I'm puttin' exclamation marks for every one of them.
imitating text	Kendra added an exclamation mark.

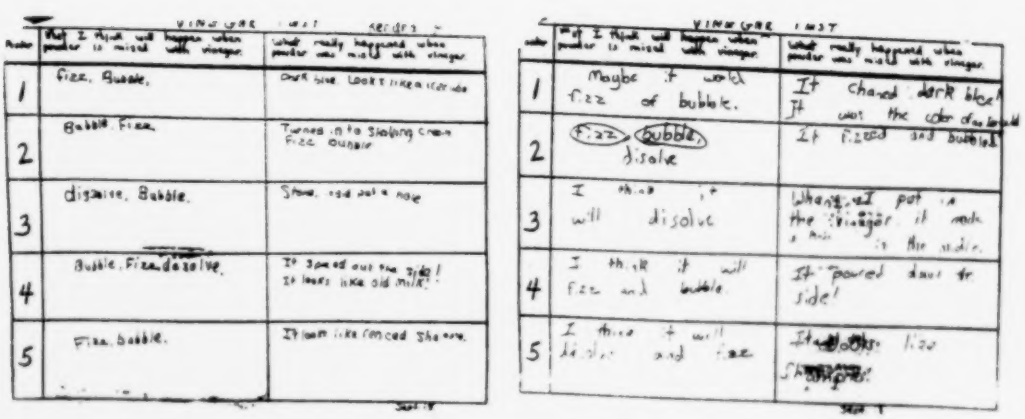

Figure 6.
Kendra's and Matt's Science Experiment Sheets

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In the area of Language Arts, students imitate format more often than actual text.

When literature models were provided, students listened attentively and often imitated the format used by the author. The imitation of text is illustrated expecially well as we examine the work of Matt, as he composes after hearing and seeing Amelia's Notebook by Marissa Moss. Mrs. Rigano hadd read the book to the class, and then provided each student with a composition notebook in which to write.

drafting	*Sept. 11, 1996*
drafting	*Las night was a* *terrible night for me!*
planning self-talk	M: Okay now. (Matt looked up towards the ceiling)
imitating format	*(Believe me)*
planning self-talk	M: I think I'll use, no. I'll use crayons. (Matt traced "believe me" in orange crayon.) I hope the color doesn't bleed through. (Matt checked the back of the page.) No, doesn't.
drafting	*When I was* *at my soccer game,*
drafting	Matt then spoke each word as he wrote it. *I was so late,* *because my parents*
	Another student asked Matt what the date was. Matt answered and pointed to where he had written the date on his paper. He continued to write silently.
drafting	*couldn't decide wether* *to ride our bikes*
illustrating planning self-talk	Matt got out some crayons and drew a picture of a bike. M: Okay, what color...part of it's green, part of it's red. (Matt colored part of the bike green and part red. The rest of the bike was drawn with a black crayon.)
drafting	*or to take*

	the green *miney van!*
illustrating	With crayons, Matt drew and colored a mini van on his paper. As he drew and colored, he talked. M: side rail, tires, tires, sliding door...green, light green. Okay, there's that!
drafting	*I was so tired* *of listening to them* *yell! I started up*
imitating format	Christopher: How do you spell Xenia? M: I don't know. (Matt had not looked up from his work. He continued to work. He drew arrows from the text he had written to the pictures of the bike and the van that he had drawn.)
drafting	*to the soccer* (turns the page)
length	M: Finished one page.
drafting	*feilds.*

Matt worked dilengently on the composition. Upon the completion of his journal entry, Matt returned to the beginning of the entry. He reread and entered text, yet this was not a process of revision and change. This process was one of adding text in an effort to imitate the format of the book, Amelia's Notebook.

planning self-talk	M: Oh, I know what I could do! (Matt was looking at the first page.)
imitating format drafting	Matt drew an arrow and wrote *Is that miny mouse?*
	Matt turned to the third page.
planning self-talk imitating format	M: (giggling) Now I can only do this on one of them. (Matt drew an arrow to the word kicked from the margin.)
drafting	*does that mean the ceral?* Matt giggled again.

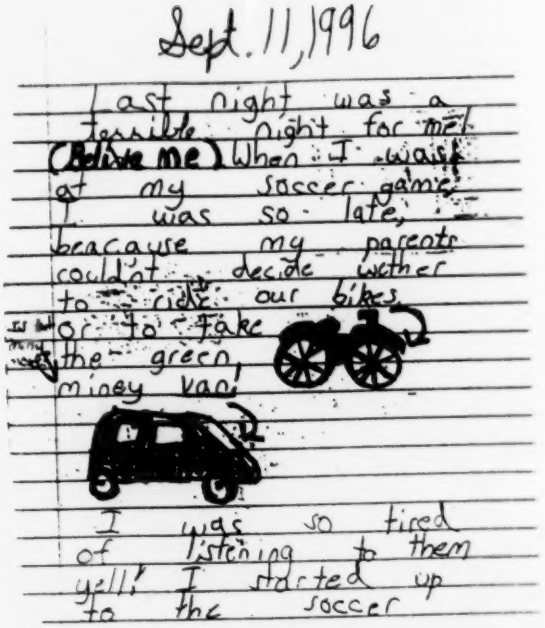

Figure 7.
Matt's Imitation of Format, Amelia's Notebook

In the area of Social Studies, students imitate actual text more often than format.

The students relied heavily upon imitating text as they wrote informational book. Another excerpt from Kendra's work, *Constitution Book* illustrates this.

drafting/imitating text *Chapter II*

The Declaration of Independence

In the summer of 1776, George Washington
took is soldiers to hide in New York. The colonies
wanted to be FREE!!!!!!
But King George
said 'No Way'
The Revolutionary war
took place in the 13
colonies.

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An outline had appeared on chart paper. A portion of the outline as provided to the students is recreated here for comparison purposes.

I. Boston Tea Party
    a. King George taxing colonists BIG TIME
    b. Tea taxes too high
    c. Boston Tea Party held
II. Declaration of Independence (1776)
    a. Colonies wanted to be free of English rule (sent Declaration of Independence)
    b. King George III said "NO WAY"
    c. Revolutionary War took place
        -George Washington (Patriots)
        -British Redcoats

As Kendra's text is compared directly with the provided outline, exact duplication of text exists.

The Declaration of Independence
The colonies *wanted to be free*
But King George said 'NO WAY'
The Revolutionary war took place

This duplication, or imitating of text, is used by Kendra to make meaning within this assignment. She uses the provided text to write a book about the colonists and their struggle for independence from English rule.

All of the students imitated actual text a great deal more than they imitated format of the text in this subject area. A reason for this is the nature of the assignment and the subject matter. Students are evaluated according to the correctness of the content produced. This genre of writing does not allow for students to write just anything upon the page. The student must create a product that conveys information. The student's

knowledge of the information may be somewhat limited, so that student relies upon an imitation, or copying of presented text.

Actual writing completed by the student is influenced by the student's beliefs about composing.

The four focal students were interviewed privately. Each student shared answers without hesitation. The students were asked three questions.

1. *What is important to you as you write?*
2. *Where do you get your ideas to write about?*
3. *How do you use those ideas?*

The student responses are given in Table 3. Also in the table, an analysis of actual writing behaviors exhibited by the student is given.

Student Beliefs and Actions Surrounding Composing Events						
Student	**What is important to you as you write?**	**Actual**	**Where do you get ideas?**	**Actual**	**How do you use those ideas?**	**Actual Behavior**
Cory	teacher approval; effort; neatness; interesting	models teacher writing; attention to handwriting	reads; thinks, Mrs. Rigano	does imitate text somewhat; no silent planning; some planning self-talk; some rereading during planning; conferences with teacher	if the ideas appeal, use the ideas	does engage in conversation about writing
Matt	details, original ideas	does spend a great deal of composing time drafting ideas; does imitate text and format, however	surroundings	imitates text and format	combine sentences and add details	imitates text; does not synthesize or extend information given
Kendra	generating ideas	uses planning self-talk a great deal	classroom surroundings; books	imitates text	not copy the ideas, but combine them	imitates text
Julia	spelling and punctuation	does pay attention to spelling and mechanics	surroundings; things found in books	pictures in books	usually draw a picture, then write about it	drawing, illustrating

Table 3.

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The beliefs of the student surrounding the topic of writing processes indicate that generally the student behaves in accordance with that belief. For instance, Kendra believes that generating or "coming up" with ideas is important in writing. As indicated by the frequency with which Kendra uses planning self-talk, we can see that her beliefs are supported by her actions. Julia believes that capitalization and puctuation are important in writing processes, and does spend a great deal of time focusing on those behaviors as she writes.

The only two behaviors that do not support the beliefs of the students are those exhibited by Matt and Kendra regarding how the ideas they generate in composing are actually used. Matt states that he combines sentences and adds details. Matt imitates text and does not synthesize or extend the information given. Matt may believe he is doing this, but his written text generally resembles the original text source in the area of Social Studies. However, Matt's perceptions do seem accurate for his writing strategies used in the area of Language Arts. Kendra believes that she uses her ideas and does not simply copy them from the original sources. She feels that she combines them, yet she actually imitates the text in areas of Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. Cory and Julia possess a very accurate view of what they do as writers. Their beliefs about what is important, idea generation, and idea usage are directly in line with the behaviors and strategies for writing exhibited by these two writers. The focal writers' beliefs are suuported by the actions they demonstrate.

There are distinctive similarities and differences among the focal writers.

The preceding findings, excerpts, and examples serve to illuminate the similarites among the focal writers as they use writing in the curricular areas of Language Arts,

Science, and Social Studies. Through the given vignettes and frequency tables, we are able to see similarities such as drafting, the use of planning self-talk, the limited use of revision when writing, the imitation of text and format in various subjects, and the use of talk (self or conversational) when students write in curricular areas.

None of the students extended text in a manner that formed a newly synthesized text. The students relied upon copying, or imitating to produce a text that was new to each student. Three of the focal students attended to the length of their written products at various times, some more frequently than others.

Yet, though similarities exist, so do differences among the writers. Julia relies upon drawing as a part of the planning process. Other writers do not use drawing, but may rely more upon rereading the text they have written as a planning strategy.

Kendra imitates text more frequently than the other students. Matt spends more time evaluating his work than others, but even at that, his evaluation is better qualified as an approval for his work rather than a critique for change. While Cory, Matt, and Kendra attend to length while writing, Julia rarely is concerned with length or compares the length of her writing to others.

Other than Cory, the students seemed to enjoy and become easily engaged in the process of illustrating their work. Cory wrote; drawing and illustrating are not part of the composing process for him.

Talk is important in the writing process. That talk may come in the form of planning self-talk or conversation. While all of the writers demonstrated a great deal of planning self-talk, only two of the writers engaged in conversations a large portion of the

time. These conversations were held as the students clarified the task presented as they wrote.

As with any activity, there are actions specific to individuals. Some of those actions are similar to the actions of others; some actions are very different. This holds true in writing.

Discussion

Social interactions do play a part in the act of writing for the learners. The peer culture in the classroom comes to value writing and being a writer. The learners believe they are writers and that their writing is to be valued. The learners also see that writing is highly valued by their teacher, and model writing that has been provided. The children interpret the act of composing not only based upon their prior knowledge, but are also influenced by the interpretation of the act of writing by those around them.

Children respond to the demands of writing placed upon them by engaging in many episodes of planning self-talk to guide them through the thought processes to arrive at words upon the page. This planning self-talk appears to be part of the natural process of writing for the children.

As students transcribe, write, or compose, they imitate the text and the format of the text provided. As thoughts are put onto paper, there is attention paid to spelling. However, the attention to spelling in the subsequent revision process was not demonstrated.

The students engage in revision activities. The most frequently used revision strategy consisted of the writers evaluating their own writing and making decisions about the quality of their writing. Generally, however, when students returned to the written

text to make revisions, the revisions were made in the area of handwriting. Some changes in meaning were made, but these changes did not require a change in text structure. The changes in meaning usually consisted of changing word choice that affected the meaning of the written passage.

Spivey's *Composing From Sources* work explains a three step process as writers use text from other sources to generate original text. Comprehension of material is one of the processes used by young writers as they compose new text from existing sources. The process of synthesis is only present at times and evidenced by some writers. The students may decide what is relative, yet rarely reorganize the text. The text is merely imitated. The act of composing, or creating new text, does not seem to exist at this level. The term composing when used in this document is not meant to describe this act, but meant to describe the act of the student creating any text.

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